

La Perrouque

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The machine and their Western business practices (WBP) model share much in common with the orbit of a carousel; they continually move according to their own spastic algorithmic rhythm. Their entrance and exit points, like a circle's circumference—lines carefully balanced, are visibly indistinguishable. *La Perruque*, Michel de Certeau's modern-day proletariat, is entrenched in the same chicanery. Tasked with defusing or "making do," the mapless minefield of his place of employment, *la perruque*, without promise of a transparent user manual, camouflages his vexation by encoding his ways of operating in order to remain complicit and compliant. To the extent that I wish to retain employment and any remaining sanity, I choose to write with an anonymous pen. If there is an argument or *telos* to be found on or between the lines, it follows the passion of Nietzsche's mad man or Camus's revolt. Intended for *la perruque*, this is a *user's manual* that critically examines the intricacies of the academic employment process, from the interview to the chicaneries that one endures during his at-will tenure. And so, this manifesto is not only a creative, autobiographical account of how I have so far tactically revolted or "made do" and am surviving the prodding and churning of the *machine*, it also is one of many portraits that collectively paint an encouraging picture of human resistance. It all begins with the job announcement.

Job Announcement

The department of philosophy at The Adventist University (TAU) invites applicants for a department chair position. This is a full-time teaching position, which begins August 2012, that requires a teaching load of five courses each semester. The primary teaching responsibilities include: Introduction to Philosophy and the Printing Press, Critical Analysis (utilizing cultural, feminist, Marxist, postmodern, psychoanalytic, and semiotic approaches), and Winning Souls according to Ellen G. White.¹

The Interview

Scene 1: Mounted on the wall was an eerie silhouette of the great prophet. 147.05 sq. ft. by 13.66 sq. ft. measures the dimension of the short-circuit, dimly lit Ellen Conversion Room. BzZz..BzZz...BzZz. With each palpitation of light, the demonic, possessed image of the great prophet disemalms, keloiding and receding into the walls. Professor Andrew, nervously

waiting, brushes his neck with his left pointer finger only to find a smither of blood. Enter the six devoted faculty members—followers of Ellen (meat free, caffeine free, and sexed free), cloaked in cultish, black Faustian garb, with an upside-down crucifix made from acacia wood around their necks—who share the good news of The General Conference (TGC) to hire/convert Dr. Andrew for the position of department chair of philosophy. Unbeknownst to Prof. Andrew, the TGC has taken a blood sample and filtered it into the proverbial “birth pen.” His signature is an unbreachable contract. The game begins.

Dr. Bates [chair of the Conversion Committee]: Prof. Andrew, the department of philosophy endorses your application and has recommended that TGC support our decision to hire you as chair of the philosophy department. After a few perfunctory signatures and samples, the conversion will be complete. [Dr. Bates orgasmically exhales, lips quivering “Ellen’s will, Ellen’s will.”]

Prof. Andrew: [Needling, gyrating, and cavity-checking his person for a pen, each pocket seemingly a complex maze of dead ends] Without fail, yes, here it is, my lu...ck...y [between the short /u/ and the digraph ck, his tongue goes mute.] pen! I mean...*mon stylo sentiment. Pardon mon, français.*

Dr. Bates: *Bien.* Sure, Prof. Andrew. In keeping with tradition, all new converts sign with a birth pen. *Pardon le expression si tu plais.* We are a small university, so we want all of our new converts to feel appreciated. It’s a personal touch—your personal touch—and our way of saying welcome to the family!

Prof. Andrew: Dr. Bates, I am a recreational connoisseur of fine writing utensils and ink, but I have not seen any fountain ink quite like this. Luxury Red, Quink? Please do share.

Dr. Bates: Hmmm, indeed. This is a DNA-pigmented sanguineous ink that operates on the principle of capillary, carbon movement. The ink is about, say, 38 years of age—exactly your age—and is a fine example of permanence. Both the pen and the ink have a unique feel...but this conversation is for another day. Let’s not keep the faculty waiting.

The Adventist University: [Collectively, the six interviewees and Dr. Bates patiently await Prof. Andrew’s signature.]

Prof. Andrew: [Prof. Andrew’s pen and the contract disagree like opposite poles of a magnet. The professor reluctantly signs—the best non-option, the only option—and the grinding cycle begins again.] That about does it.

The Adventist University: [a large roar culminates] Welcome, and God Bless Ellen! To our new convert!

Le Jeux and *Règles* and the Not-So-Beautiful Game

Admittedly, *The Interview* is my nerdy, literary attempt to stone my contemporaries with Adventist bibles without facing Ellen's eternal wrath. Beneath the satirical veneer commences a subversive game of power, its ideological composition, what it reveals/conceals, and how it disindividualizes, which is the tacit logic of *les jeux*. Disindividualization is the process in which the individual is magically raptured from ordinary life and thrown into a collective phantasia, what anthropologists call *phratris*, in which solidarity, openness, and benevolence are disguised as *other means*. Our concern is therefore one that investigates *other means*, ideological inscriptions "so obvious that one does not see them" (de Certeau 22). Decoding or re-encoding this Wittgenstein-like riddle, there is hidden publicly some-else-where a limited edition user's manual that is from the Bronze Age and is readily available. Whether you're playing Lick the Dean's Ass, Chase the Superior, The Non-Participatory Faculty Game, Provost Says, or some other humiliating gray-collar working game, systemic *règles* (rules), both visible and invisible, are governing codes that render possible or impossible operational movements (enunciative practices) on the given field. Game theorist Jesper Juul (2005), in his text *Half-Real*, ascribes some of the following qualities to gaming:

- (1) Games are rule based; that is, the activity has structure, which makes it possible to repeat it.
- (2) Games are variable and have a quantifiable outcome: The various outcomes can be precisely enumerated and each of the outcomes is assigned a value.
- (3) Players are attached and have a vested interest in the outcome.
- (4) Games have negotiable consequences (fictive or real-life) to an outcome. (36)

We therefore may conclude that games are an interplay of systemic activities played out in *espace* in which participants make decisions and exercise power to achieve a *unilateral* outcome. Significant here are the terms *espace* and *unilateral*. *Espace* signifies *le domaine*, or the iterating venues of play in which everyday practices are exercised. This is critical, and I will return to the topic.

To be clear, *règles* are never altogether defined. Depending upon the situation, they are both determinate and indeterminate. *Règles* are determinate in the sense that invisible hands write with invisible ink on invisible paper, so a piece is still a work in progress. The players, then, must possess a type of *savoir faire* that sheds light on such double-dealing. Navigating such institutional contradictions and immaterialities is similar to dodging projectiles from a barrage of Mayan atlatls—you're on borrowed time! Operating in bad faith becomes the only *modus operandi* for most. Strategies include (1) teaching 15-18 credits a semester without additional pay, (2) volunteering to take on additional administrative duties, (3) assisting

with facilities management, (4) visiting neighboring high schools to recruit, and (5) without promise of remuneration, paying out of pocket for pizza for the department—part of the indenture contract you sign to keep your job and stay in good favor. In return, the occasional limp, clammy, shifty-eye uncertain handshake from a superior prevents one from seeing how close the projectile really is.

What follows are inventoried and dated thoughts, diagrams, and analyses of the most salient games played at TAU. Ranging from beginner to advanced, all games carry weighted consequences. *It always begins with the job announcement!*

Jeux 1: *Job Announcement, aka Solicitation for a Prosti-letariat*

Level: Beginner

TAU: The Game Encoded

Lecturer, Assistant, Associate, Full Professor, depending upon qualifications, tenure-track

Beginning fall 2013. 5 courses/year (3-2/semester), undergraduate and graduate. Dissertation and thesis supervision. Usual committee work. Ph.D. in area of specialization prior to appointment. Competence in appropriate ancient and modern languages.

TAU was founded in the name of The Adventist Church as a national university and center of research and scholarship; its School of Philosophy, which is canonically established as an Ellen White Faculty, seeks candidates who understand and will make a significant contribution to the university's distinctive mission and goals.

La Perruque: The Game Decoded

Purpose: To fish for *Call Girls for High-End Escorts*, those willing to prostitute themselves into serfdom without promise of emancipation.

Research agenda: Publish or perish, team player/martyrdom, community or university service/free labor. Salary.

Intellectual value cannot and should not be quantified. Consider yourself part of an emerging elite, gray-collar, working-poor class. Minorities, including women, are welcome to apply as the university benefits from tax credits. All applicants must provide certification of their **New Religious/Academic Movement Vaccinations (NR/AMV)**, 3 letters of conversion, transcript(s) of perpetual training and brainwashing, M.A./Ph.D. (preferred), and oaths of poverty, silence, and obedience.

Equipment: Cover letter, extreme debt, rose-tinted glasses, bipolar disorder

Interlude

Solicitation for a Prosti-letariat: Showing My Ass(ets)

You know those seedy gringo games played in South America where a beautiful woman at a discotheque pretends that she's interested in you, kisses you on the neck or gently brushes her lips against your ear, then walks away? Unwittingly, you are a marked man. You're a target. My cover letter was the seedy adulterous kiss. For about a year, I've moled around the church, taught workshops, helped out with extra-curriculars. I even castrated myself by publicly repenting. Hell, the university even included me in their Bible retreats. While there, I gained intimate knowledge of disciplinary environments of enclosure and control existing between the church and university. And if I was to save myself from the drudges of unemployment, my cover letter had to reveal that I was a convert, not a dissonant—a missionary, not an intellectual. I had to show that I wanted to win souls for Ellen. My cover letter was the perfect rouge, a linguistic portrait of who they were, and by extension who I pretended to be. Cover letters and other documents of verification essentially express the same thing—I need a job, no two ways about it! Much like Internet porn, it's a game of aesthetics and speculation. You gaze, intellectually masturbate, and cum to a decision. Pygmalion's virtue of adoration and Narcissus's vice of self-indulgence served me quite well and are the reasons that I achieved competency in this game and am currently employed.

Game Played

Cover letter: Solicitation for a Prosti-letariat

“Three, oh, it's a magic number. Yeah, it is—the magic number.” Lithium's atomic number, the holy trinity, and the anecdotal “third time is a charm,” etc., all signify the importance of the three, so my cover letter was divided into three parts: castration, ideological brainwashing, and submission.

The opening paragraph demonstrated humiliation. I once more castrated myself, if that's even possible, by talking about my religious conversion, likening it to Paul's journey to Damascus. I also talked about how my life is now dedicated to “winning souls for Ellen.” Admittedly, this is not a phrase the institution uses, but it's catchy and cultish, and Adventism has that feel. Moreover, Ellen White's text on education was particularly helpful in defining my role as a vessel used by God to nurture and spread His word. It really drove home the true purpose of Adventist education, the assumed sincerity of my conversion, and that I understood the purpose of the church and the university as one in the same—as Jesus (God, the son) is one and the same in the trinity. Ergo, if I were hired, my whole being, no matter how free spirited, had to possess the gravity and singularity of an Adventist black hole.

The second paragraph addressed the nexus between the church (*habitus*) and the university (field). To be quite honest, I just paraphrased a bullet point from the pastor's sermon: Mental, physical, social, and spiritual health, intellectual growth, and service to humanity form a core of values that are essential aspects of the Adventist education philosophy. Spiritual metaphors, scientific metaphors, and alchemic metaphors are often used when talking about religious and intellectual transformation, so I had to tightrope over the 666 bridge of intellectual freedom and religious enlightenment. The distinction between the church and the university is not altogether clear—even Adventists find it challenging. From what I have observed, this is intentional and allows for *puppeteering bureaucrats* to pass the buck whilst finding protection behind the invisible hand.

My final paragraph emphasized the purity of my *bodily habitus* as a hollow, completely cleansed vessel, ready to be whored and soiled by the best taker. Low self-esteem, submissiveness, and docility—all priority qualities of prostitutes. Remember, we are all prostitutes, or in this case prosti-letariats. Be it the call girl for the jet-setting escort, we all have a price. The cover letter communicates your price and what favors you are willing to do. Religious institutions are nothing but warehouses with crosses on them; they charge by the hour, so I knew what I was getting into!

Note to Reader

Reflections: Solicitation for a Prosti-letariat

Reconnaissance at various levels is strongly recommended. Depending on the size of the institution and the department, you can penetrate only so far. TAU is an anomaly because the church is both a material and immaterial extension of the university. By forfeiting many Saturday nights, I learned a great deal about its organizational structure and took note of (1) its governing behavioral practices, i.e., interior/exterior dispositions, (2) the ideological nexus between the university and the church, and (3) bodily habitus, i.e., the body as a vessel consubstantiated and/or, in some cases, transubstantiated with an unknown quality 'X.' Intel served as a cheat sheet to get my foot in the door. I got the interview.

Jeux 2: Jeux bac à sable

Level: Beginner to advanced

TAU: The Game Encoded

The general purposes of the interview for the interviewer is to gather pertinent information about the candidate(s) in question, to fact-check one's qualifications and job-related skill sets: communication, organizational, leadership, motivation, work ethic, competency, and emotional and behavioral intelligence.

La Perruque: The Game Decoded

You apply for a position because you have no sandbox in which to play, are about to be kicked out of the sandbox, or you need more sand. Everyone knows this. Every interview is an evolving manifestation of strategies and tactics learned in the nursery school sandbox: deception, negotiation, and mechanics of power. Metaphorically, the sandbox represents the *habitus*—the building blocks of one's culture—a deep cognitive template that allows for members of the community to function systematically; therefore, success in the sandbox depends on one's *savoir faire*—*habitus* in relation to the field(s). *Fields* are micro-*habiti* that have their own procedural codes but are not altogether autonomous from their *habitus*, thus concealing and protecting their true operational logic; moreover, unlike *habitus*, *fields* are liquid-like, possessing all the transformative qualities of matter, which makes them very difficult to detect. Thus, the game is played on two levels: beginner and intermediate. The interview is an empirical test of whether you can follow rules and how likely you are to go AWOL. Behavioral and emotional intelligence are assessed in relation to rational practices within the *habitus* at the beginner level. At the intermediate to advanced level, the *habitus* is no longer static. Its violent energy is released, setting off high-velocity chain reactions. *Fields* are birthed; they collide, cancel each other out, and bleed into one another. Likewise, the game *Sandbox* is not static. It is an incessant eruption of signifying homonyms (i.e., sandbox = potlucks = departmentals = faculty retreats = faculty evaluations = spirit day). For all intent and purpose, the game, no matter the level, boils down to how much sh*t you are willing to shovel, if you'll sh*t on others, and how likely you are to cry Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) once the sh*t hits the fan. That's a lot of sh*t.

Equipment: Shovel, smile implants, black suit, linguistic roulette, knowledge of *la perruque*, shifting fields

Interlude

Jeux Bac à Sable

From the moment the phone hits the receiver until the doorbell rings, you get the chills. Is she a non-smoker, is "she" a "he," bait and switch, D&D free, or worse—law enforcement. You just don't know! Interviews, like soliciting for prostitution, are a game of roulette—black, you're lucky; red, you get burned. The outcome is fatally certain, but you don't care. I got red; after being escorted to the back room, I got a bad feeling that I was gonna get f*cked. One by one, the virgin bible bangers entered the room and formed a circle around the table. I was at the head. Even after going to Jesus Camp and participating in a whole bunch of extra-curriculars, when Dr. Bates asked me to commence the interview with prayer, for 30 seconds or so I was a fish out of water. Irregular heart palpitations, arrhythmic breathing—the last

time I prayed was for the winning pick-6 lotto. Like all sinners, I defaulted to “*Our Father, who art in Heaven...*” No sooner had the “n” in Heaven left my mouth, Dr. Bates interrupted me with dagger eyes, ready to chase me, like Jesus chased the money changers out of the temple. Avoiding eye contact was a way for me to not acknowledge his and possibly others’ contempt for my sacrilegious prayer. Instead, I murmured through until the last word, “*Amen.*”

Other than inviting them to happy hour at a Brazilian steak house, there was no greater offense. However, not everyone was ready to publicly flog me; they were too busy getting off at my expense. Others had a sense of humor or at least could mask their disapproval. Maybe they were mollified by my limited edition, vintage, lambskin Bible with Ellen’s signature engraved; the lingering aroma of my spiced ginger tea; or my acacia wood crucifix. Unbeknownst to them, each artifact selected was a calculated tactic on my end that constructed a terministic screen (a *selective* network comprising cultural terms, practices, and symbols) used to persuade them and bolster my ethos. Who knows. They got off. I got the job. Happy ending!

Game Played

Jeux Bac à Sable

At 8:00 a.m. in the morning, on 42nd Street in New York, you can find *Les Trois Perdants* or a three-card monte game. From left to right, right to left, the field (card) floats. Don’t lose sight! For *la perruque*, winning is an interminable process that begins with a few precarious victories followed by a dammit, shrug, hands in the pocket, and walk of shame to elsewhere. Losing is inevitable, but the manner of losing isn’t. The challenge is semantically decoding the language game played, for it is a matter of ideological homonyms, the difference between the image and the shadow or the habitus and field. They are the same, yet different; thus, *la perruque* has to keep his eye on the dealer’s use of strategic space (anticipating probable and certain movements) and trapdoors, while calculating his next movements. *La perruque* is the worker’s work disguised as work for his employer. De Certeau explained: “[I]t may be as simple a matter as a secretary’s writing a love letter on ‘company time’ or as complex as a cabinetmaker’s ‘borrowing’ a lathe to make a piece of furniture for his living room” (25).

The syndicated comic strip *Dilbert* is an anecdotal narrative of the modern-day *perruque*—an undervalued, overworked, under-paid non-smoker who smokes because it ensures a 10-12 minute work break. This worker is occasionally AWOL and takes nooner masturbation breaks, extended lunch breaks, and the more-than-occasional promenade to the printer. Depending on where this person parks, the I-left-something-in-my-car excuse can shave between 60-90 minutes off their work day. ²

La perruque is the tactical response to the ongoing gray-collar chicanery present in everyday places of business. It's a way of "dicking around" without dicking anyone over. Already built into the perimeter of the sandbox, or taken into account by the architectonic structure, is dicking around, so any tactical maneuver or psychological victory by *la perruque* is really *faux* and just a feel-good moment. In ***Solicitation for a Prosti-leteriat: Showing My Ass(ets)***, I have gone to considerable detail recounting how the game of negotiating in the sandbox is played, the importance of tactics (artifacts) as a means to manipulate and persuade. What follows are tactics that I've charted over the course of a year at TAU whose sole strategic purpose was to manufacture a climate of fear and anxiety by means of surveillance or the representation of surveillance that eliminates idleness and encourages motionless movements in which institutional surveillance